

SIERRA MADRE
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HIGH LIGHTS



Feb. 1945

Alfred James Dunway

SIERRA MADRE ARTS GUILD



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HIGH LIGHTS

FEBRUARY 1945

Volume 6 Number 2

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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HIGH LIGHTS, from the foothills; issued monthly by Sierra Madre Arts Guild at the Old Brick Oven, 28 Windsor Lane, in Sierra Madre, California.

AFTERNOON

Helen Ferguson Caukin

Amazed, she sees the day grow long!
Like water now its shadow glides
Unbelievably thin and far
Away from the spent sun that slides

Downward to mingle with privet-hedge.
Her heart stands still as the windless grass
Whose vivid hold on the landscape's breast
Within the draining hour shall pass.

Over the wall and city block
(Of trumpet and timing-drum, no sound)
Flows flat and strange parade: herself,
Long tree and house: horizon-bound.

This swift retreat toward the eastern rim
Takes rise of breath to contemplate.
Oh, surely not an hour gone by
The shadow wavered at her gate!

(American Poet)

POET'S CONFESSION

Weary of books and weary more of men,
I fled the city for the solitudes;
But in my haste I lugged along my pen,
A ream of paper, all my platitudes,
And on my hip a rhymers' dictionary.
And so I thought, with all the tools at hand,
Inspired by nature's charming land of faery,
To write a poem beautiful and grand.

I sat and leaned my back against the mountains
That leaned aloft against the turquoise skies;
To concentrate on sylvan groves and fountains;
But all my thoughts were city streets and cries.
And so, in woodland scenes (oh, what a pity!),
I wrote a yard-long "pome" about the city.

GUILD MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Guild will be held at the regular place, 28 Windsor Lane, on Friday evening, February 2, at 8:30 p.m. Mr. John Edwin Hogg, formerly with the Holland-American Steamship Company, will speak on the subject: "Have We Underestimated Our Enemy - Japan."

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, Mr. Hogg attended the University of Illinois, 1908-1912. After completing the schooling there, he spent two years on a series of U.S. and British assignments in Asia, Africa and Europe. The outbreak of World War I caught him in Berlin where the Germans jailed him for a time as a suspected French spy until he proved his U.S. citizenship. He came to Los Angeles in 1914 to spend three years as reporter, photographer and associate editor with the Los Angeles Express, and was later one year as associate editor of Popular Mechanics Magazine. He resigned the latter place to enlist for aerial photographic work, serving with the 48th Service Company, U.S. Signal Corps, in World War I. After the war he returned to Los Angeles where, with John Anson Ford, he organized the advertising agency of Hogg and Ford, a firm that for eight years specialized in international railroad, steamship and foreign tour accounts. In 1926, Mr. Hogg took up field work in the Orient, the Dutch East Indies, Australia and New Zealand for the De Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij (Royal Packet Navigation Co.) of Amsterdam, Holland. He did not return again to California until 1930.

Between overseas sojourns and numerous other activities, Mr. Hogg has found time to do extensive writing of feature articles on a wide variety of subjects for U.S., British and continental European publications. His work in this field requires no introduction to readers of Westways, Esquire, The Nation's Business, American Nature Magazine, The Christian Monitor, Kansas City Star, Washington Post, and many other publications.

At the January meeting of the Guild, Mr. F.W. van West gave a very interesting talk upon the art of restoring paintings and the periods of painting. With this number of the magazine, Mr. van West begins a series of articles upon that subject.

Mr. van West, recently come to Sierra Madre, is by profession a restorer of paintings, having spent many years here and in Europe in that line of work.

NATURE THE TEACHER OF ART

F.W. van West

This is the first of a series of monthly talks on art and paintings that are intended to be a guide for the buyer of paintings and will of necessity touch almost anything pertaining to painters, paintings, paints, schools of paintings, the restoring and upkeep of paintings and, in short, anything to do with the art of painting.

As is self-understood, each person has his or her likes and dislikes in the decorating of a room or house and if the acquisition of a painting is solely meant to insert a color note, one's own taste has to be the judge. There are a number of clever contemporary artists to choose from, whose works are very adaptable for such purposes. Remember, however, that it is always advisable in such cases to get if possible the original work of an artist; for although a clever copy may look like the original, there is always something lacking, either in color, texture, or feeling and above all one is at once deprived of the interesting possibility that such an original in later years may become very valuable. Do not make the mistake, however, of failing to distinguish between a copy and a replica. A copy is like the original with this difference, that it is done by a different artist. A replica is a copy of the painting made by the artist who made the original.

Leonardo da Vinci made several replicas of "Mona Lisa" and his "Madonna of the Rocks," in the National Gallery at London, is a replica, with some modifications, of the "Vierge aux Rochers" in the Louvre (now most likely in the collection of Hermann Goering). There are a great many other well-known artists who made replicas; to mention a few, Rosa Bonheur who made a replica of her now very famous "Horse Fair" for Sir Edwin Landseer, the well-known painter of dogs and horses. Raphael made very many replicas of his paintings, and there are numerous others.

Now, if one were to set his heart, for example, on a Vincent van Gogh, and nothing else would do for that spot in the room, my advice would be to get a color reproduction of the painting, that is providing the price of the original is the stumbling block, as it most likely would be. Remember, however, that there was a time when one would have been able to acquire that van Gogh for the moderate price of \$25.00. What happened to van Gogh's paintings is happening at present to many unknown artists who sell their original paintings for a mere trifle and who, in later years when famous, would like to buy back their early work for a

far greater sum of money than they originally received.

Everybody loves a bargain and bargains occur more often than one thinks in the hunt for paintings. I remember that some time ago I was rummaging through a lot of prints and paintings in one of Los Angeles' secondhand stores when I was struck with the beauty of a torn canvas, for all that it was badly damaged and filthy with accumulated dust and dirt. I examined it hastily and found a quickly executed seascape on the back of the canvas clearly signed by Thomas Moran. I bought the picture for fifty cents and could hardly wait to get home to examine it more closely. After having cleaned and restored the painting, it turned out to be a lovely landscape of a river winding its way through hilly meadows and a stern-wheeler leisurely steaming downstream. What I had thought to be a seascape, turned out to be the sketch of the steamboat in the painting. Born in England, Moran became one of America's foremost landscape painters. By the age of the canvas I judged the painting to be eighty or ninety years old, which would put the time of execution down to approximately 1850 or 1855. Later on, I sold this painting to a collector for a price that ran into the hundreds of dollars.

If, however, one is not familiar with the idiosyncracies of artists of the past, one should stick to his own contemporaries, to the artists who are still living and who sell their work directly to the buyer or through reliable dealers. In these war times when everybody is making higher wages than ever before, it is my advice to put that part of one's money that is left after buying war bonds into the work of one or more contemporary artists. Who knows? One may invest in the fame of a second van Gogh.

In the early days of the twentieth century when American millionaires, out of patriotic spirit or otherwise wanted to donate a museumful of old masters to their community, those rich donors with few exceptions had a habit of collecting for that purpose paintings of which the creators, as they thought, had passed on centuries ago. In the majority of cases they succeeded, but in a number of instances the old masters they thought had long ago departed from this earth were still painting Raphaels, Rembrandts, da Vincis, Titians and others in Italy, France, Holland and America, turning out old masters at the rate of one every few days. The canvases were carefully doctored up or an old canvas was painted over, wormholes in the stretchers were the work of men instead of insects, antique glazes were applied, etc., etc. But, like the perfect crime, there is always something that trips up the crook.

Chemistry broke down the pigments on the spurious canvases. It was, for instance, detected that a pigment was used in a so-called Rembrandt (1606 - 1669) which first saw the light of day in 1820. The X-ray detected a painting of the nineteenth century under a so-called "El Greco" (1540 - 1613). Canvas was used that was unknown to the supposed creator of the painting or wood was used that was planed by machines unknown to the artist. Unfamiliarity with the way in which an old master would sign his name is, for the expert, easy to detect.

I remember one instance where a lover of art, always on the lookout for a find, once phoned me in the middle of the night to tell me that he had just acquired a beautiful Josef Israels (1822 - 1911) for a ridiculously low price. Now I happen to be very well acquainted with the works of Israels, having visited his atelier numerous times in Holland, and, although I was not very enthusiastic about his paintings of poor fisherfolk and of his disastrous use of bituminous paints, I was well aware of the fact that his paintings sold for extremely high prices. Nothing would do but this buyer would send a taxi for me that I might the sooner pass upon the genuineness of his acquisition. When I told him, however, that he might possibly save himself one hundred dollars by spelling the name of Josef Israels to me over the phone, he spelled it out from the painting, J-O-S-E-P-H Israels. I informed him that I was going back to bed and that he had saved himself one hundred dollars (my fee for that unholy hour).

Very few art lovers know that Peter van der Faes (Vaes, 1618 - 1680) and Sir Peter Lely are one and the same person, that "El Greco" was the Spanish nickname (meaning "the Greek") of Domenico Theotocopuli. Should anyone find a painting signed "El Greco," as I once did, he may know that it is a fraud. Rembrandt's surname was van Rijn, but his canvases are all signed Rembrandt, etc.

Paintings by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Prud'hon, Watteau, Israels and other artists of their time are more of a liability than an asset to the buyer, because they all used asphaltum glazes for their beautiful temporary effects. An asphaltum glaze in a painting shows the same characteristics as a tar paper roof. It is highly allergic to atmospheric conditions and will crack up in a short while in a manner for which no restorer has as yet found an effective remedy.

Auction sales are poor places to get bargains, because preexamination is often superficial and what may seem a low price often turns out extremely expensive.

horace

the guild mouse

jest now me and rachel is mad - not at eetch uther but at a lot uv sumbody else. it awl kum about when we saw a kupil uv big fat dogs ketchers chasing a pore skinny littel dog. ther thay wer one hed a lasso and tother hed a net onto the end uv a pole and thay hed that pore skinny littel dog awl kornered up. it hirt us so that we tirked away. the pore skinny littel dog warnt doing nothing only wawkin over akrost the street to look at a fireplug when as the big fat dogs ketchers wuz kuming down the street in ther big black fat dogs ketchers kar as stopped and went after that pore skinny littel dog.

me and rachel we used for 2 like that pore skinny littel dog on akount uv we used for 2 go 2 his house for 2 pick up krums and that pore skinny littel dog never so much as bothered his hed to bother us at awl on akount uv U see that nice old lady what owned that pore skinny littel dog hed taut him so as not to hirt nothing. we dont no as how or not as that nice old lady hez ever got that pore skinny littel dog back from those big fat dogs ketchers or is like 2 but if she didnt she is very sad tcnite on akount uv as 2 how she lives alone and loves that pore skinny littel dog like a child as U mite say and as how that pore skinny littel dog loves her like a child loves its mama as U mite say 2 and that makes me and rachel feel bad.

after that ther wuz another dog a littel brown and white one what wuz frendly with everybody as used for 2 go and jump up and lick the kids hands and their faces 2 if as thay ast him. well them big fat dogs ketchers kum along and jest when as that littel brown and white dog as wuz frendly with everybody wuz jest going 2 jump up and lick ther hands and ther faces 2 if thay ast him what did thay dew but grab that littel brown and white dog as wuz frendly with everybody and stick him down into a kage in ther big black kar for 2 take him away sos he aint never kuming back.

hunderds and hunderds uv pore littel dogs as never hirt nobody has bin "put away" as thay say outen uv sirra madra by them big fat dogs ketchers and that aint awl. ther wuz a time oncet and not so long ago when as this town wuz a frendly town wher dogs strolled the streets chased kats and fit one another and added zest and kolor and spice and perfum to ower more or lese gray drab existense. rachel and me used for 2 love for 2 peak around the kornor 2 see a dogs fite. besides sez rachel dogs is mices best friends as on akount uv thay chases kats. check and dubelcheck sez eye and nuf sed.

OF NEW CALEDONIA

2/C MaM. Bert Embree

It is just one year ago today since I sailed out through the Golden Gate leaving the good old U.S.A. behind me. It doesn't really seem as though a full year has passed since then - I can still remember the names of the fellows I came across with, and I was with them only thirteen days coming across. A lot has happened since then both here and back there, and now that I am starting my second year over here I wonder what will happen during the next twelve long months. One thing I feel sure will happen - that's me coming home!

It's really a wonderful day for the beach here today. There is plenty of sun and just enough breeze to keep it cool. It seems odd to have you folks write to say that you are all huddled around the fireplace, while it's so hot down here. I just have to keep remembering that I am almost half way round the world and clear down "underneath." There doesn't seem to be any distinctive change in the seasons in this place. One day it is hot as ---- next day it may be raining and fairly cold. It's that way all the year round. Last Christmas Day it was hot enough to sweat the nuts off a jeep, and on New Years it rained and was actually chilly.

Last Sunday two of us fixed up a diving mask so we could go down to see what the bottom of our beach is like. It's a pretty good mask, one rigged up from an old gas-mask and a small oxygen tank. The longest I stayed under water was a little over thirty minutes, but some guys stayed over an hour down there and then had plenty of air left. I saw some very funny looking animals "down under." You may not believe it, but I saw one fish that you could look right through. From just behind his head clear to his tail, was all transparent. All that was visible was his backbone and the outline of his form. That sounds like a fish story that can be seen through, but I swear that it is true. I also saw a lot of other odd shapes and strange colors. The only really big fish that I've seen out here was one I saw about three months ago while I was out riding an aquaplane. I did not stop to argue with him. He was just a little too big. I left the ocean to him. After all, if he wanted to swim just where I was, who was I to quibble? The other day, when out about a half mile on a paddle-board, I had the wits nearly scared out of me. I was just floating around when all of a sudden a big green head came up out of the water making a loud hissing noise. I didn't know what the heck it was at first, because it went back under and I caught but a quick glimpse of it. Before I could figure out what to do, it

came up again, only a little closer (about fifteen feet or so away). That time I got scared and I raised up to look at it. I must have scared it in turn and it went down under. As it dived I saw that it was a big water turtle. I'll bet that it was six feet across. I didn't wait to see if it would come up again; I just "took off" for the beach. The guys on shore said that my arms were going like a windmill, and I doubt if I touched the water once coming in. I used to go away out just for the exercise, but I'll get my exercise near the beach from now on.

Yesterday I met four fellows that I had known when in school. I didn't even know that they were in the service as yet. It seemed so good to "shoot the breeze" with someone from home. I haven't seen many out here that I knew, but once in a while one does drop by. I was showing that folder about the Wisteria Vine you sent me to some of the boys here. A lot of them had heard of the place but had not ever seen it. One boy, however, from Michigan, said that he had been to Sierra Madre to see the Vine at one time when he was visiting Los Angeles. It's a small world! One of the fellows here has a brother in the harbor on a ship, and I went down to see him last night. He has a pretty good place on the ship and is scheduled to go back to the States soon now. I don't know, though. They seem to lead a pretty dirty life on board, even if it is on the water. I guess I'm just a "landlubber" at heart. I don't think I'd mind a little of sea duty - at least the MaM aboard of this ship said it was good duty for him - but not on a ship in harbor.

By the way, if you want to read the truth about just one of the situations out here, get hold of the "Look" Magazine, the issue of November 14, 1944. The article is headed, "Don't Send Women to the Front," the last article in the magazine. It brings in this island as one example, too. You asked if I've picked up any French yet. No; but 'nuf sed about this.

Well, turning to happier memories, my second Xmas dinner out here was considerably better than the first one. We had better chow, a much more pleasant chow-hall and the day was cool and nice, not hot like that first Xmas. I was afraid that the fellows here would remember that Xmas Day is my birthday and take me down; so, when they went out to evening chow, Kirk and I got out of here and over to his brother's. I'm glad that we did, too, because they had remembered and were only waiting until later to "tan my bottom." While we were over there, one of the fellows came in with a big 300-pound sea turtle that he had snagged while fishing. We cut it up into thick steaks and fried it, and

you can believe that it was really good, too. I'd never before tasted turtle. Sweet revenge for the big one that gave me the scare.

I have been making good use already of the Xmas presents sent me. That "canned heat" outfit will come in very handy lots of times. As a matter of fact, I've already used it. Kirk had a bad toothache tonight, and I fixed him up with a hot soup made from one of these bullion cubes you sent me. I have a little hot-plate that I made from a couple bricks and a door spring, with a wire to the socket, and was rather proud of it; but the little stove is much better. After the packages came, we had a real feast here one evening. There were six of us. One guy contributed some home-cooked chicken, another had some ham from home, while still another had some fruitcake, some Nestle's hot chocolate and some home-made cookies. I ran up and got a loaf of bread, butter and jam. The things we do in this hut! But we do have fun.

On New Year's Eve Kirk and I went over again to his brother's for a steak-fry. What a time we had! We went over for chow at noon and then went for a jeep-ride in the afternoon. As we were riding around, we picked up some very choice meat - enough to make forty large sirloin steaks! I also picked up some fresh tomatoes, lettuce and cucumbers. In the evening we went to the show, and after that started in to fry the steaks. We welcomed in the new year with our chompers around a nice, juicy steak sandwich with tomatoes and all the trimmings.

I don't know how much longer we'll be around here. We are now making preparations preliminary to leaving this place. I wish I could know if I'm going to stay here, get the F.P.O., or go to Pearl Harbor or Guam, or go home. A new scuttlebutt is floating around that I may be in the new group to Australia. All rumors. God only knows and He sure won't tell. But the suspense is killing me as to where I may be a month from now. Anyway, my deal isn't so bad, compared with lots. I don't think, for example, that I'd like to be in Wendell Soetens' shoes. He's on a ship, but is in the beach-jumper outfit! They are the ones who ride the landing boats in, and then are left on the beach. Nope, not for me.

The mail is certainly slow now, probably because we are on the "alert." We get "good" mail only once a week now. We call a mail good when there's a lot that comes in at one time. Guess we'll have to wait until we get up north before we get a good mail again.

SAN GABRIEL EXHIBITION

The San Gabriel Artist Guild announces for this month another exhibition of work by the late Frank Tenny Johnson, N.A. Mr. Johnson lives in the hearts of countless admirers of his paintings of western frontier life. The life of the Old West with its well-known "wide open spaces" when life was lived to its fullest and sometimes wildest under the desert sun and the midnight stars, had a fascination and an appeal for Mr. Johnson which he transferred to the spectator through his paintings over a period of years. Possibly it was because he could understand that life from his own cowboy days that he was able to paint its lights and shadows understandingly and to give a thrill to the beholder which never seemed to pall, and made him essentially a man's painter.

The San Gabriel Artist Guild is deeply grateful to Mrs. Johnson for her splendid co-operation that has made possible this exhibition of her husband's work. It is a well-chosen show, representative of the versatility of the artist in his various moods. Many small canvases are his sketches of horses while others are of canyon walls and the prairies. Mr. Johnson covered a great part of the life of the Old West - Indians making their way on horseback down through a canyon with warm sunshine hues. The West of by-gone days will live on in the Johnson canvases.

On February 4, from 3 to 6 p.m., the Round Table - Alhambra - will serve a tea honoring Mrs. Johnson. The gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

FANNIE CHARLES DILLON

Miss Fannie Charles Dillon, pianist and well-known as one of America's foremost composers, is now available in Sierra Madre from October to May each winter for lecture-recitals as well as for classes and private lessons in Musical Composition and in Piano at 429 Sturtevant Drive.

Miss Dillon has many successful appearances to her credit with her compositions at Steinway Hall, N.Y., Town Hall Club, Brooklyn Academy of Fine Arts and elsewhere.

THE BIG TOAD WHO FOUND HIS LIMITATIONS

There was upon an uncertain time a little man who lived in a big city who became ambitious to shine as a popular luminary, albeit but a tiny one, and to draw satellites from the depths. Sensing, however, that his feeble candle was but little likely to hold its own against the bright glare of the Neon signs, he decided to remove his residence to a small town because, as he said, "it is much better to be a star of the first magnitude in a tenth magnitude sky rather than one lost in the shuffle of the Milky Way, and it may be that if the night is dark enough there I can be seen glowing through the haze."

Accordingly, he popped up in a drowsy village by the crossroads where he settled down as a solid citizen and proceeded to become a "joiner." He joined the rural Order of Elks, the Redmen, the Kiwanis, the Rotarians, the Lions and the local Chamber of Commerce, and became a member of the most fashionable church on Main Street where he was soon made a deacon, a Sunday-school teacher and a pillar of respectability. In short, it was not so long before he was a real "character about town," a rather substantial fixture whose wife entertained regularly at bridge-teas and who saw to it that not a week went by that his name was not somehow prominently mentioned in the local "Squeek."

As time went on and the genuine worth of his public spirit to the community became generally recognized, one full responsibility and irksome job after the other was gradually wished upon him, particularly those unburdened with any remuneration. He was made the head of committees, was elected the president of clubs and was appointed delegate at large as toastmaster and cheerleader for all ordinary and extraordinary occasions. Eventually he was even "drafted" to run for town councilman, and it was everywhere whispered out loud that he must surely be the next mayor. It is likely that he might have acceded, for he had never let any petitioner down yet; but he was one of those opposed to any draft of labor on principle and, furthermore, he remembered just in the nick of time that his mission was to shine openly, not under cover, and that, thus handicapped, he might not be able to see clearly to "lift" altogether whatever might be required of him. Therefore, like Caesar before him, he put the honor thrice by with the excuse that while mentally a giant he was rather weak in the back.

Moral: It's not always the biggest toad that makes the biggest splash in the puddle.

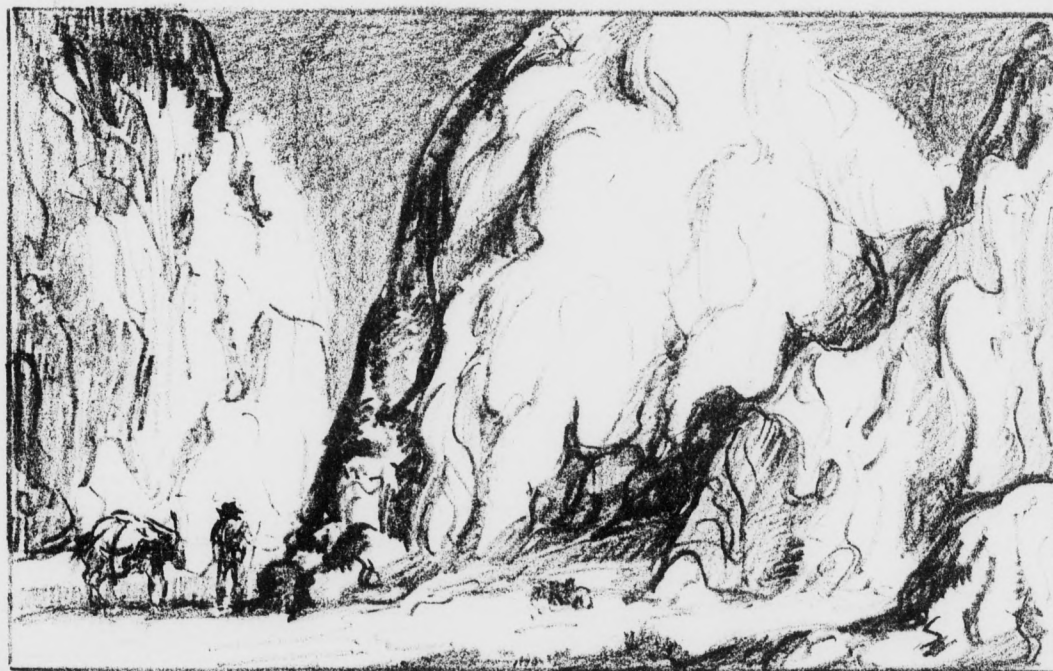
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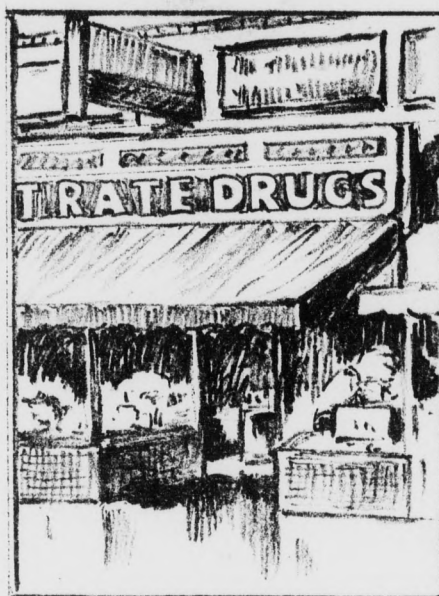
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